

WAS ADAM CREATED AT THE END OF THE WORLD?

By Paulin Bédard

Was Adam created at the beginning of the world or at the end? This question may seem awkward, since the church has always considered Adam as the father of the human race. But in a context where secular theories on the origin of the world are being pushed into the church, this question must seriously be raised and answered by the clear teaching of Scripture.

Created in the beginning or at the end?

Both progressive creation and theistic evolution teach that the origin of man is much older than what the church has traditionally believed. According to these modern doctrines, man appeared on earth a very long time ago. So if man is so old, why ask such an awkward question about man's possible appearance near the end of the world?

Both progressive creation and theistic evolution are "old earth" views, which means they believe that the earth is extremely old and that the world has existed for billions of years. On this gigantic scale, man either slowly evolved (according to theistic evolution) or was instantaneously created (according to progressive creation) after an extremely long history of the earth. Thus, man would have appeared on earth a very long time after the beginning of the world — not in the beginning.

As for the traditional literal interpretation of the days of creation, it maintains that Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day of the history of the world, approximately 4000 years before Christ. On this scale, the creation of man corresponds to the beginning of the world, after only 0.0004 % of the 4000 year period.

Progressive creation, on the contrary, claims that God created the world and the living creatures by successive stages spaced out over billions of years. The days of creation are said to be very long periods of time. According to this view, the universe is 13.8 billion years old, the earth 4.5 billion years old, and man was created approximately 50,000 years ago.

To help us understand the meaning of these gigantic numbers, let us imagine that we compact into one single year the whole history of the earth until the first coming of Christ. If we reduce the alleged 4.5 billion years into one year, the earth began to be formed on January 1st, and the end of the earthly ministry of our Saviour corresponds to December 31st at midnight. On this reduced scale, man would have appeared on December 31st at 11:54 PM, and the extra-biblical recorded history (less than 3000 years before Christ) would cover only the last 20 seconds of the year. In other words, Adam was supposedly created after 99.999 % of the 4.5 billion years of the earth.

As for the theory of evolution (both atheistic and theistic), it alleges that God created the living creatures by means of a very slow biological evolution from the first cell to man. According to this view, the first hominids (or pre-humans not yet in the image of God) appeared about 5 million years ago. On the scale reduced to one year, it would correspond to around 2:00 PM on December 31st, after 99.9 % of the 4.5 billion years. It even took another 4 million years or more before they became real men. We are told, for example, that archaic *Homo sapiens*, the forerunner of anatomically modern humans, evolved between 400,000 and 250,000 years ago, or between 40 to 25 minutes before midnight on the last day of the year, according to the compacted model.

This means that, for both progressive creation and theistic evolution, man was created close to the end of the history of the earth — not in the beginning.

In the beginning, according to Christ and the apostles

What did Christ and his apostles teach about this subject? They taught, on the contrary, that man was created in the beginning and that the human beings have existed ever since the beginning of the world.

Christ said in Matthew 19:4: *“Have you not read that he who created them **from the beginning** made them male and female...?”* In Matthew 19:8, he also said: *“Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but **from the beginning** it was not so.”* The phrase *“from the beginning”* recalls Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-2, and Hebrew 1:10. These texts use the same word and that points us to the absolute beginning of the world.

The Gospel of Mark is more precise. Combining Genesis 1 and 2, Christ said in Mark 10:6-8: *“But **from the beginning of creation**, God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* Some claim that it means “from the beginning of *their* creation” or “from the beginning of *marriage*”. They say that the phrase “the beginning of creation” cannot mean “the beginning of the world”, because, by saying that, Christ would have made a mistake. He would have falsely said that Adam and Eve were created in the beginning of the *creation process*, on the first day of Genesis 1, while in fact they were created on the sixth day, at the end of the creation process. This argument, however, is not valid. First, why would Christ have needed to say that God created the human beings male and female from the beginning of their creation? Emphasizing such a thing does not really make sense. They were obviously male and female from the beginning of their own creation and from the beginning of the institution of marriage. They could not have been anything else. Moreover, as the texts below show, Christ meant the beginning of world history, not just the beginning of the creation process. The context is clear. In God’s whole plan for the world, marriage is permanent because man was created male and female from the very beginning of the world.

The same phrase is used in other passages referring to the beginning of the world. In Mark 13:19, we read: *“For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been **from the beginning of the creation** that God created until now, and there never will be.”* The beginning of creation is not opposed to the end of the creation process, but to “now” and to the end of the world. In fact, the parallel text in Matthew 24:21 uses the equivalent *“**from the beginning of the world**”*. Jesus predicted trials of great magnitude that will come just before His return. Happily, for the sake of His chosen ones, the Lord decided to cut short the days of the final tribulation. And yet, Jesus warns us that trials of such intensity have never been experienced by human beings from the beginning of the world and will never be experienced to the near end. This implies that man has existed from this very beginning, as he will exist until the end.

Again, we find the same phrase referring to the beginning of the world in 2 Peter 3:3-4: *“Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were **from the beginning of creation**.”* According to the apostle Peter, even the scoffers of “the last days” will know the connection between the beginning of the world and the time when the first patriarchs began to die. This passage shows us again that man has existed from virtually as long as the creation itself and that the fall into sin and its deadly effects happened very early in God’s good creation.

John 8:44 says: *“He (the devil) was a murderer **from the beginning**, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.”* Satan became a murderer when he lied and tempted Eve to sin, which resulted in man’s death. This murder happened from the beginning, not billions of years later.

We read in Luke 11:49-51: *"I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets, shed **from the foundation of the world**, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah."* Men of God began to be killed from the time of Abel, the first murdered man recorded in the Bible. According to Christ, this event virtually corresponds to the moment when the world came into existence. The phrase "the foundation of the world" meaning the moment when the universe began to exist is also found in Matthew 25:34, John 17:24, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20, and Revelation 13:8; 17:8.

Romans 1:19-20 says: *"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, **ever since the creation of the world**, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."* The apostle Paul says that the eloquent witness of God revealed through His created works has been clearly perceived by men from the creation of the world. Such a claim would be irrelevant if there were no man to see this creation during billions of years.

Clearly, these passages rule out the possibility that man was created billions of years after the beginning of creation. According to Christ and His apostles, man was really created in the beginning of the world — not at the end!

A good explanation of the present situation

This teaching is in full harmony with what Paul says about the painful condition of the present corrupt creation and the origin of this sad condition. Romans 8:20 tells us: *"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope."* Paul does not specify who is the "him" who subjected the creation, but in the context, we understand that the creation was subjected by God. Of course, Adam was responsible for his sin, which provoked God's judgment. But it is God who subjected the creation to futility when He said in Genesis 3:17: *"cursed is the ground because of you"*. In Romans 8:20-21, the creation which *"was subjected"* by God is also the creation which *"will be liberated"* by the same God. Only God has the authority to subject creation to vanity and to do it *"in hope"*, as only God has the power to liberate creation from its bondage to decay.

"Submission to vanity," "bondage to corruption," and *"the sufferings of the present times"* mentioned in Romans 8:18-22, could not have been in this world for billions of years before the creation of man. Contrary to what "old earth" views claim, God did not create the world with these painful, futile, and corrupt realities. According to Genesis 1:31, all that God had made was *"very good"* before the fall. The earth was not cursed yet. Subjection to futility and bondage to decay came after the fall and after the curse, the creation having been subjected *"not willingly"* to futility.

This is precisely why there is hope! According to "old earth" argumentation, God created the world with suffering, illness, catastrophes, and corruption. Then, near the end of the world, he decided to deliver the creation from that weakness and usher mankind into a newer, better, and suffering-free creation. But how can such a scenario be possible? If God created the world with inherent futility and built-in decay, how could there be any hope for change and deliverance? Vanity and corruption would be constitutive of God's "very good" creation itself. But what has been broken by man can be and will be repaired by God! Yes, the present creation is in deep need of being *"set free from its bondage to corruption"* and is eagerly awaiting the moment it will *"obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God"*! (Romans 8:21).

Paul says in Romans 8:22: *"The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now."* Believers are also suffering (v. 17-18) and groaning (v. 23). In these shared groaning and pains, both the creation and the believers are awaiting together the deliverance to

come. As *“the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God”* (v. 19), so *“we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies”* (v. 23).

In this subjection to suffering, God had already prepared His own liberating purpose, for it is *“in hope”* that the creation was subjected. The creation has been awaiting this deliverance since the very moment it was subjected to corruption. According to the Genesis account, there never was a period of time when the cursed creation existed without any hope of redemption! Even before God cursed the ground, He had already promised to send a Saviour through the offspring of the woman (Genesis 3:15), a Saviour who would come to destroy Satan and give new hope to both sinful man and the whole damaged creation. This promise was given to man right from the beginning! As soon as Abel (and maybe Adam and Eve too?) believed in the promise of redemption, a shared groaning in pains began to be expressed and a shared hope in the deliverance was born. There has been an ongoing “groaning together” of both creation and believers from the beginning of the world *“until now”*! There is no room for a creation in pain, subject to decay and vanity for billions of years in the absence of believers. There is no room for 99.999 % of earthly history without a “groaning together” and without a hope shared together with believers on earth.

In all these passages, the Word of God clearly teaches that man and woman have existed from the beginning of the world. They fell into sin very early in the history of creation. All its awful and deadly consequences have subjected men and the world to corruption since virtually the beginning of creation. The good news is that in Christ there is a glorious hope for the children of God and for the whole creation.

It really does make sense from the beginning to the end!

According to this biblical perspective, it is really the “old earth” views that are awkward. Why would God have waited for billions of years before creating man in His image? Why would He have left the earth without stewards and gardeners for billions of years? Why would He have left the beauties of his creation without human eyes to perceive them and marvel at the glory and power of the Creator? Why would so many wonderful creatures have appeared (and many of them become extinct) during billions of years without a man and a woman to enjoy them and to develop these resources to the glory of God? Why would a good God have made a world subjected to a corruption intrinsic to the created order? How do we explain that Christ our King would have been without a Church and human subjects on earth for billions of years? Why would the suffering creation be left alone in its childbirth pains for billions of years, without any children of God sharing with it the same sufferings and the same hope of redemption? Why wait until December 31st, till the last minutes before midnight?

These false teachings distort the biblical worldview concerning the role of man and woman on earth and concerning the origin of suffering and decay in the creation. God’s goodness itself is questioned, since He would have created a world with corruption and vanity affecting the world for billions of years before man sinned. Even the reign of Christ on His Church and the place of the Church on earth become insignificant in the history of the earth — being relegated to the last paragraph, even the last line of the history of the world.

What really does make sense is the fact that man was created in the beginning of the world. In His goodness and wisdom, the Lord God gave to Adam and Eve the mandate to have dominion over the world and to take care of the earth in His name — right from the beginning. God created the world with all its beauties and resources, so that man could see God’s wonderful works in their original splendour, immediately after they were created. As God’s steward of His goods, man could exercise dominion and so glorify his Creator on the “very good” earth that had freshly come out of the hands of the Lord. God placed them in this originally very good earthly habitation.

When vanity, corruption, and bondage irrupted into creation, profoundly affecting the whole earth, immediately, there were sons of God on earth who began to be recreated by God's grace, based on the promise of the Saviour. In this way, the gathering of God's people and Christ's reign on His church extends to the whole history of the earth, from the beginning to the end. Ever since the moment the Gospel began to be preached in Genesis 3:15, *"the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now"*. Creation is expressing that groaning in conjunction with the children of God, in the glorious hope of their shared future deliverance. And all this, right from the beginning of the world!

This is why we confess that *"the Son of God, out of the whole human race, **from the beginning of the world** to its end, gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself, by His Spirit and Word, in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life."* (Heidelberg Catechism, answer 54). *"This church has existed **from the beginning of the world** and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects."* (Belgic Confession, article 27). *"Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect, in all ages successively **from the beginning of the world.**"* (Westminster Confession, article VIII.6). Then, on the judgment day, *"all people, men, women, and children, who ever lived, **from the beginning of the world** to the end, will appear in person before this great Judge."* (Belgic Confession, article 37). Do we really believe and uphold this confession?

No, Adam was not created near the end of the world. It is the last Adam who came *"in these last days"* (Hebrews 1:2). Our Saviour Jesus Christ came to redeem us from our sins and misery and to give us the glorious hope of a restored and beautiful new creation. As children of God, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, we are strongly encouraged by this promise that we are eagerly awaiting to see in all its glory. Like the creation in its childbirth pains, we must be patient and persevering in our present sufferings. We have the comfort and assurance that, at the very end of the present world, we will enjoy to the full the perfect deliverance and beauty of the new creation with our Saviour.

As the first Adam was given dominion over the earth from the beginning — but lamentably failed — so the last Adam has received complete dominion in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), and He will fully succeed in accomplishing His plan of redemption to the end. He came to repair all the wrongs that the first Adam and all his descendants have done and are doing to God, to themselves, to their neighbours, and to the whole world. We have the glorious hope that our Saviour will wonderfully succeed in His work of restoration. As the one seated on His throne promised: *"Behold, I am making all things new."* (Revelation 21:5). Glory, honour and praise to the one who is *"the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End"*! (Revelation 22:13).

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